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MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,
April 10, 1862.

To the Senate and House of Representatives
of the Confederate States:

I herewith transmit to Congress a communication from the Secretary of the Navy, covering a "detailed report of Flag Officer Buchanan, of the brilliant triumph of his squadron over the vastly superior forces of the enemy, in Hampton Roads, on the 8th and 9th of March last."

JEFFERSON DAVIS.

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LETTER OF SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,
NAVY DEPARTMENT,
RICHMOND, April 7th, 1862.

To the President:

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith copy of the detailed report of Flag Officer Buchanan, of the brilliant triumph of his squadron over the vastly superior forces of the enemy, in Hampton Roads, on the 8th and 9th of March last, a brief report, by Lieut. Jones, of the battle of the 8th, having been previously made.

The conduct of the officers and men of the squadron, in this contest, reflects unfading honor upon themselves and upon the navy. The report will be read with deep interest, and its details will not fail to rouse the ardor and nerve the arms of our gallant seamen.

It will be remembered that the Virginia was a novelty in naval architecture, wholly unlike any ship that ever floated; that her heaviest guns were equal novelties in ordnance; that her motive power and her obedience to her helm were untried, and her officers and crew strangers, comparatively, to the ship and to each other; and yet, under all these disadvantages, the dashing courage and consummate professional ability of Flag Officer Buchanan and his associates, achieved the most remarkable victory which naval annals record.

When the Flag Officer was disabled, the command of the Virginia devolved upon her Executive and Ordnance Officer, Lieut. Catesby Ap R. Jones, and the cool and masterly manner in which he fought the ship in her encounter with the iron-clad Monitor, justified the high estimate which the country places upon his professional merit.

To his experience, skill and untiring industry, as her Ordnance and Executive Officer, the terrible effect of her fire was greatly due. Her battery was determined in accordance with his suggestions, and in all investigations and

tests, which resulted in its thorough efficiency, he was zealously engaged.

The terms of commendation used by the Flag Officer, in characterizing the conduct of his officers and men, meet the cordial endorsement of the Department: and the concurrent testimony of thousands who witnessed the engagement, places his own conduct above all praise.

With much respect,

Your obedient servant,

S. R. MALLORY,

Secretary of the Navy.

REPORT OF FLAG OFFICER BUCHANAN.

NAVAL HOSPITAL,
Norfolk, March 27th, 1862.

SIR: Having been confined to my bed in this building since the 9th inst., in consequence of a wound received in the action of the previous day, I have not had it in my power at an earlier date to prepare the official report, which I now have the honor to submit, of the proceedings on the 8th and 9th insts., of the James River Squadron under my command, composed of the following named vessels: Steamer Virginia, Flag Ship, ten guns; steamer Patrick Henry, twelve guns, Commander John R. Tucker; steamer Jamestown, Lieut. Commanding J. N. Barney, two guns; and gunboats Teazer, Lieut. Commanding W. A. Webb; Beaufort, Lieut. Commanding W. H. Parker, and Raleigh, Lieut. Commanding J. W. Alexander, each one gun. Total 27 guns.

On the 8th inst., at 11, A. M., the Virginia left the Navy-Yard, Norfolk, accompanied by the Raleigh and Beaufort, and proceeded to Newport News to engage the enemy's frigates Cumberland and Congress, gunboats and shore batteries. When within less than a mile of the Cumberland, the Virginia commenced the engagement with that ship with her bow gun, and the action soon became general, the Cumberland, Congress, gunboats and shore batteries concentrating upon us their heavy fire, which was returned with great spirit and determination. The Virginia stood rapidly on towards the Cumberland, which ship I had determined to sink with our prow, if possible. In about fifteen minutes after the action commenced we ran into her on her starboard bow; the crash below the water was distinctly heard, and she commenced sinking, gallantly fighting her guns as long as they were above water. She went down with her colors flying. During this time the shore batteries, Congress, and gunboats kept up their heavy concentrated fire upon us, do-

ing us some injury. Our guns, however, were not idle; their fire was very destructive to the shore batteries and vessels, and we were gallantly sustained by the rest of the squadron.

Just after the Cumberland sunk, that gallant officer, Commander John R. Tucker, was seen standing down James River under full steam, accompanied by the Jamestown and Teazer. They all came nobly into action and were soon exposed to the heavy fire of shore batteries. Their escape was miraculous, as they were under a galling fire of solid shot, shell, grape, and canister, a number of which passed through the vessels without doing any serious injury, except to the Patrick Henry, through whose boiler a shot passed, scalding to death four persons, and wounding others. Lieut. Commanding Barney promptly obeyed a signal to tow her out of the action. As soon as damages were repaired, the Patrick Henry returned to her station and continued to perform good service during the remainder of that day and the following.

Having sunk the Cumberland, I turned our attention to the Congress. We were some time in getting our proper position in consequence of the shoalness of the water, and the great difficulty of managing the ship when in or near the mud. To succeed in my object, I was obliged to run the ship a short distance above the batteries on James River, in order to wind her. During all the time her keel was in the mud; of course she moved but slowly. Thus we were subjected twice to the heavy guns of all the batteries in passing up and down the river, but it could not be avoided. We silenced several of the batteries, and did much injury on shore. A large transport steamer alongside the wharf was blown up, one schooner sunk, and another captured and sent to Norfolk. The loss of life on shore we have no means of ascertaining.

While the Virginia was thus engaged in getting her position for attacking the Congress, the prisoners state it was believed on board that ship that we had hauled off; the men left their guns and gave three cheers. They were soon sadly undeceived, for a few minutes after we opened upon her again, she having run on shore in shoal water. The carnage, havoc and dismay caused by our fire compelled them to haul down their colors, and to hoist a white flag at their gaff and half mast, and another at the main. The crew instantly took to their boats and landed. Our fire immediately ceased, and a signal was made for the Beaufort to come within hail.

I then ordered Lieut. Commanding Parker to take possession of the Congress, secure the officers as prisoners, allow the crew to land, and burn the ship. He ran alongside, received her flag and surrender from Commander Wm. Smith and Lieut. Pendergrast, with the side-arms of those officers. They delivered themselves as prisoners of war on board the Beaufort, and afterwards were permitted, at their own request, to return to the Congress, to assist in removing the wounded to the Beaufort. They never returned, and I submit to the decision of the Department whether they are not our prisoners. While the Beaufort and Raleigh were alongside the Congress, and the surrender of that vessel had been received from the commander, she having two white flags flying, hoisted by her own people, a heavy fire was opened upon them from the shore and from the Congress, killing some valuable officers and men. Under this fire the steamers left the Congress; but as I was not informed that any injury had been sustained by those vessels at that time, Lieut. Commanding Parker having failed to report to me, I took it for granted that my order to him to burn her had been executed, and waited some minutes to see the smoke ascending from her hatches. During this delay we were still subjected to the heavy fire from the batteries, which was always promptly returned.

The steam frigates Minnesota and Roanoke, and the sailing frigate St. Lawrence, had previously been reported as coming from Old Point, but as I was determined that the Congress should not again fall into the hands of the enemy, I remarked to that gallant young officer, Flag Lieut. Minor, "that ship must be burned." He promptly volunteered to take a boat and burn her, and the Teazer, Lieut. Commanding Webb, was ordered to cover the boat. Lieut. Minor had scarcely reached within fifty yards of the Congress, when a deadly fire was opened upon him, wounding him severely and several of his men. On witnessing this vile treachery, I instantly recalled the boat and ordered the Congress destroyed by hot shot and incendiary shell. About this period I was disabled, and transferred the command of the ship to that gallant, intelligent officer, Lieut. Catesby Jones, with orders to fight her as long as the men could stand to their guns.

The ships from Old Point opened their fire upon us. The Minnesota grounded in the north channel, where unfortunately the shoalness of the channel prevented our near ap-

proach. We continued, however, to fire upon her until the pilots declared that it was no longer safe to remain in that position, and we accordingly returned by the south channel, (the middle ground being necessarily between the Virginia and Minnesota, and St. Lawrence and the Roanoke having retreated under the guns of Old Point,) and again had an opportunity of opening upon the Minnesota, receiving her heavy fire in return; and shortly afterwards upon the St. Lawrence, from which vessel we also received several broadsides. It had by this time become dark and we soon after anchored off Sewell's Point. The rest of the squadron followed our movements, with the exception of the Beaufort, Lieut. Commanding Parker, who proceeded to Norfolk with the wounded and prisoners, as soon as he had left the Congress, without reporting to me. The Congress having been set on fire by our hot shot and incendiary shell, continued to burn, her loaded guns being successively discharged as the flames reached them, until a few minutes past midnight when her magazine exploded with a tremendous report.

The facts above stated as having occurred after I had placed the ship in charge of Lieut. Jones, were reported to me by that officer.

At an early hour next morning, (the 9th,) upon the urgent solicitations of the Surgeons, Lieutenant Minor and myself were very reluctantly taken on shore. The accommodations for the proper treatment of wounded persons on board the Virginia are exceedingly limited, Lieut. Minor and myself occupying the only space that could be used for that purpose, which was in my cabin. I therefore consented to our being landed on Sewell's Point, thinking that the room on board vacated by us, could be used for those who might be wounded in the renewal of the action. In the course of the day, Lieut. Minor and myself were sent in a steamer to the hospital at Norfolk.

The following is an extract from the report of Lieutenant Jones, of the proceedings of the Virginia on the 9th:

"At daylight on the 9th we saw that the Minnesota was still ashore, and that there was an iron battery near her. At 8 we ran down to engage them (having previously sent the killed and wounded out of the ship) firing at the Minnesota, and occasionally at the iron battery. The pilots did not place us as near as they expected. The great length and draft of the ship rendered it exceedingly difficult to work her; we ran ashore about a mile from the frigate and were

backing fifteen minutes before we got off. We continued to fire at the Minnesota, and blew up a steamer along-side of her; and we also engaged the Monitor, sometimes at very close quarters; we once succeeded in running into her, and twice silenced her fire. The pilots declaring that we could get no nearer the Minnesota and believing her to be entirely disabled, and the Monitor having to run into shoal water, which prevented our doing her any further injury, we ceased firing at 12, and proceeded to Norfolk.

"Our loss is two killed and nineteen wounded. The stem is twisted, and the ship leaks, we have lost the prow, starboard anchor and all the boats; the armor is somewhat damaged, the steam pipe and smoke stack both riddled, the muzzles of two of the guns shot away. It was not easy to keep a flag flying; the flag staffs were repeatedly shot away; the colors were hoisted to the smoke stack and several times cut down from it."

The bearing of the men was all that could be desired; their enthusiasm could scarcely be restrained. During the action they cheered again and again. Their coolness and skill were the more remarkable, from the fact that the great majority of them were under fire for the first time; they were strangers to each other and to the officers, and had but a few day's instruction in the management of the great guns. To the skill and example of the officers is this result in no small degree attributable."

Having thus given a full report of the actions on the 8th and 9th, I feel it due to the gallant officers who so nobly sustained the honor of the flag and country on these days, to express my appreciation of their conduct.

To that brave and intelligent officer, Lieutenant Catesby Jones, the executive and ordnance officer of the Virginia, I am greatly indebted for the success achieved. His constant attention to his duties in the equipment of the ship; his intelligence in the instruction of ordnance to the crew, as proved by the accuracy and effect of their fire—some of the guns having been personally directed by him, his tact and management in the government of raw recruits, his general knowledge of the executive duties of a man-of-war, together with his high toned bearing were all eminently conspicuous, and had their fruits in the admirable efficiency of the Virginia. If conduct such as his—and I do not know that I have used adequate language in describing it, entitles an officer to promotion, I see in the case of Lieutenant Jones one

in all respects worthy of it. As flag officer I am entitled to some one to perform the duties of flag captain, and I should be proud to have Lieutenant Jones ordered to the Virginia as Lieutenant Commandant, if it be not the intention of the department to bestow upon him a higher rank.

Lieut. Simms fully sustained his well earned reputation. He fired the first gun, and when the command devolved upon Lieut. Jones, in consequence of my disability, he was ordered to perform the duties of executive officer. Lieut. Jones has expressed to me his satisfaction in having had the services of so experienced, energetic and zealous an officer.

Lieut. Davidson fought his guns with great precision. The muzzle of one of them was soon shot away; he continued, however, to fire it, though the wood work around the port became ignited at each discharge. His buoyant and cheerful bearing and voice were contagious and inspiring.

Lieut. Wood handled his pivot gun admirably, and the executive officer testifies to his valuable suggestions during the action. His zeal and industry in drilling the crew contributed materially to our success.

Lieut. Eggleston served his hot shot and shell with judgment and effect; and his bearing was deliberate, and exerted a happy influence on his division.

Lieut. Butt fought his gun with activity, and during the action was gay and smiling.

The Marine Corps was well represented by Capt. Thom, whose tranquil mien gave evidence that the hottest fire was no novelty to him. One of his guns was served effectively and creditably by a detachment of the United Artillery, of Norfolk, under the command of Captain Kevill. The muzzle of their gun was struck by a shell from the enemy, which broke off a piece of the gun, but they continued to fire as if it was uninjured.

Midshipmen Foute, Marmaduke, Littlepage, Craig and Long rendered valuable services. Their conduct would have been creditable to older heads, and gave great promise of future usefulness. Midshipman Marmaduke, though receiving several painful wounds early in the action, manfully fought his gun until the close. He is now at the hospital.

Paymaster Semple volunteered for any service, and was assigned to the command of the powder division, an important and complicated duty which could not have been better performed.

Surgeon Phillips and Assistant Surgeon Garnett were prompt and attentive in the discharge of their duties; their kind and considerate care of the wounded, and the skill and ability displayed in the treatment won for them the esteem and gratitude of all who came under their charge, and justly entitled them to the confidence of officers and crew. I beg leave to call the attention of the Department to the case of Dr. Garnett. He stands deservedly high in his profession, is at the head of the list of assistant surgeons, and there being a vacancy, in consequence of the recent death of Surgeon Blacknall, I should be much gratified if Dr. Garnett could be promoted to it.

The engines and machinery, upon which so much depended, performed much better than was expected. This is due to the intelligence, experience and coolness of Acting Chief Engineer Ramsey. His efforts were ably seconded by his assistants, Tynan, Campbell, Herring, Jack and White. As Mr. Ramsey is only Acting Chief Engineer, I respectfully recommend his promotion to the rank of Chief; and would also ask that second Assistant Engineer Campbell may be promoted to first Assistant—he having performed the duties of that grade during the engagement.

The forward officers, boatswain Hasker, gunner Oliver, and carpenter Lindsey, discharged well all the duties required of them. The boatswain had charge of a gun, and fought it well. The gunner was indefatigable in his efforts; his experience and exertions as a gunner have contributed very materially to the efficiency of the battery.

Acting Master Parrish was assisted in piloting the ship by pilots Wright, Williams, Clark and Cunningham. They were necessarily much exposed.

It is now due that I should mention my personal staff. To that gallant young officer Flag Lieutenant Minor, I am much indebted for his promptness in the execution of signals, for renewing the flag-staffs when shot away—being thereby greatly exposed—for his watchfulness in keeping the Confederate flag up; his alacrity in conveying my orders to the different divisions, and for his general, cool and gallant bearing.

My aid, Acting Mid'n Rootes, of the Navy, Lieutenant Forrest, of the Army, who served as a volunteer aid, and my clerk, Mr. Arthur St. Clair, Jun'r, are entitled to my thanks for the activity with which my orders were conveyed to the different parts of the ship. During the hottest of the

fight, they were always at their posts, giving evidence of their coolness. Having referred to the good conduct of the officers in the flag-ship, immediately under my notice, I come now to no less pleasing task, when I attempt to mark my approbation of the bearing of those serving in the other vessels of the squadron.

Comm'r Jno. R. Tucker, of the Patrick Henry, and Lieuts. Com'dg J. N. Barney, of the Jamestown, and W. A. Webb, of the Teazer, deserve great praise for their gallant conduct throughout the engagement. Their judgment in selecting their positions for attacking the enemy was good; their constant fire was destructive, and contributed much to the success of the day. The "general order," under which the squadron went into action, required, that in the absence of all signals, each commanding officer was to exercise his own judgment and discretion in doing all the damage he could to the enemy, and to sink before surrendering. From the bearing of those officers, on the 8th, I am fully satisfied that that order would have been carried out.

Commander Tucker speaks highly of all under him, and desires particularly to notice that Lieut. Colonel Cadwallader, St. Geo. Noland, commanding the post at Mulberry Island, on hearing of the deficiency in the complement of the Patrick Henry, promptly offered the services of ten of his men as volunteers for the occasion, one of whom, Geo. E. Webb, of the "Greenville Guards," Commander Tucker regrets to say, was killed.

Lieut. Com'd'g Barney reports "every officer and man on board of the ship performed his whole duty, evincing a courage and fearlessness worthy of the cause for which we are fighting."

Lieut. Com'd'g Webb specially notices the coolness displayed by Acting Master Face and third Assistant Engineer Quinn, when facing the heavy fire of artillery and musketry from the shore, whilst the "Teazer" was standing in to cover the boat in which, as previously stated, Lieutenant Minor had gone to burn the "Congress." Several of his men were badly wounded.

The "Raleigh," early in the action, had her gun-carriage disabled, which compelled her to withdraw. As soon as he had repaired damages as well as he could, Lieut. Com'd'g Alexander resumed his position in the line. He sustained himself gallantly during the remainder of the day, and speaks highly of all under his command. That evening he was ordered to Norfolk for repairs.

The Beaufort, Lieut. Comd'g Parker, was in close contact with the enemy frequently during the day, and all on board behaved gallantly.

Lieut. Comd'g Parker expresses his warmest thanks to his officers and men for their coolness. Acting Midshipman Foreman, who accompanied him as volunteer aid, Midshipman Mallory and Newton, Captain's clerk, Bain, and Mr. Gray, pilot, are all specially mentioned by him.

On the 21st inst., I forwarded to the Department correct lists of the casualties on board all the vessels of the squadron, on the 8th; none, it appears, occurred on the 9th.

While in the act of closing this report, I received the communication of the Department, dated 22d inst., relieving me temporarily of the command of the squadron for the naval defences of James River. I feel honored in being relieved by the gallant Flag Officer, Tatnall.

I much regret that I am not now in a condition to resume my command, but trust that I shall soon be restored to health, when I shall be ready for any duty that may be assigned to me.

Very respectfully,
FRANKLIN BUCHANAN,
Flag Officer.

Hon. S. R. Mallory,
Secretary of the Navy.

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